



Iowa Soccer League (ISL) – Rec NORTHEAST RULES

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Iowa Soccer League (ISL) Rec NORTHEAST is to provide opportunities to play, and to develop, promote, and administer youth soccer competition at the recreational level for the 08U-19U age groups. The League will strive to provide an enjoyable, developmentally-appropriate and competitive platform for players and coaches, while keeping administrative barriers to a minimum so kids can get on the field and games can be played.

The ISL Rec NORTHEAST game rules follow the current rules and guidelines of the Iowa Soccer Association and US Youth Soccer listed below, with a few modifications. These rules are designed to be age-appropriate, in terms of the size of the field, the number of players on the field, the length of the game, and sophistication. The Iowa Soccer Association and US Youth Soccer Association rules are in the following documents which may be found on the Iowa Soccer website (www.iowasoccer.org).

- US Youth Soccer Small-Sided Games handbook (includes 06U-12U rules)
- USSF 08U Rules
- USSF 10U Rules
- ISL Rec NORTHEAST Additional Rules
- FIFA Laws of the Game

MODIFICATIONS

The following are ISL Rec NORTHEAST specific modifications of the above rules, and summaries of the age-specific guidelines:

By and large, we conform to the US Youth Soccer Rules that simplify the game of soccer for our younger players. The following additional rules apply to all age groups:

1. The game: **ALL PLAYERS MUST RECEIVE AT LEAST 50% PLAYING TIME!** This is an expectation that each team in the league will adhere to this policy in honoring the spirit of the game.
2. Before the game: The referee will check player passes. Coaches must present player passes to the referees who shall hold the passes during the game. The referee shall check for proper equipment: shirts, shorts, shoes, socks, and shin guards. Socks must cover shin guards. Padded casts are allowed at the referee's discretion with a signed doctor's release. HOME team wears the primary team color if the uniforms are not distinct from one another. The referee chooses a game ball. It shall be the responsibility of both teams to provide a properly inflated game ball for each match. The referee will have a coin toss and the winner chooses which goal to attack. The other team will kick off.



3. NO PASS, NO PLAY! A player may not participate in any game without their official player pass. A team has a 15-minute grace period after the scheduled start of the game to have the minimum number of players – with passes – present to field a team or the game will be cancelled.
4. PARENTS from both teams should be on the opposite side of the field from players and coaches. No one may sit or stand behind the goals or along the goal lines. ***Please reference COVID-19 Protocols***
5. JEWELRY – All jewelry must be removed for games. This includes earrings, watches, necklaces, bracelets (including plastic and woven bracelets), and piercings. This is a matter of safety and is non-negotiable. Medical alert bracelets are allowed but must be taped down. “Taping” of earrings or other bracelets is not allowed, is not safe, and the referee must insist that earrings come out for games (whether just recently pierced or not).

STANDARDS CHART

Iowa Soccer League Rec Northeast - - - Standards

Update 9/4/2025

	7U-8U	9U-10U	11U-12U	13U+	13U+ small-sided 7 v 7
Field: Length Range	25-35	55-65	70-80	100-120	70-80
Field Width Range	15-25	35-45	45-55	55-80	45-55
Number of Players	4 v 4	7v7	9v9	11v11	7v7
Maximum Roster Size	8	14	18	25 max 22 "game active"	14
Maximum Roster Size – Recommended	6-8	10-12	14-16	16-18	12-14
GK	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Playing Time (Minutes)	4 x 8	2 x 25	2 x 30	2 x 35	2 x 35
Break Time (Minutes)	5	10	10	10	10
Ball Size	3	4	4	5	5
Goal Size (feet)	4 x 6	6.5 x 18.5	6.5 x 18.15	8 x 24	6.5 x 18.5
Offside	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Iowa Soccer establishes the following member rules for roster sizes and players per side to support age-appropriate development and consistent team formation across the state. These rules are grounded in widely recognized gameplay formats and development standards for each age group.

At the same time, we recognize that member clubs operate in diverse environments, each with unique challenges related to geography, player availability, and local resources. To support these realities, Iowa Soccer's member rules allow for roster size flexibility, giving clubs the ability to make decisions that best serve their players, coaches, and communities—particularly in recreational and grassroots programs.

Certain programs, leagues, or competitions may enforce more restrictive roster rules based on specific player development models or event requirements. In such cases, those program-specific rules take precedence over the rules outlined here.



8U RULES SUMMARY

The 8U division will play 4v4 with a maximum roster of 8. No goal keepers shall be used and coaches are encouraged to have all players join in the attack. The length of the game is four (4), 8-minute quarters. All kicks are direct. Games will require 1 referee. The offside law is NOT in effect. Teams will compete using a size 3 soccer ball. Minimum number of players needed to start a game is 3. Heading is NOT allowed (see section "Heading Restrictions and Limitations" below).

- Build-Out Line:
 - On goal kicks
 - As per US Soccer: "the build-out line promotes playing the ball out of the back in a less pressured setting."
 - The ISL Rec Northeast requires that the opponent "drops off" to the build-out line when the goalkeeper has the ball in his or her hands (10U), and on all goal kicks. The defending team may not release from the half line until the ball has been played. Referees will be instructed to strictly enforce this rule.
 - This rule is designed encourage the development of building play out of the back.
- The build-out line will be the half line!

10U RULES SUMMARY

The 10U division will play 7v7 with a goalkeeper, max roster of 14. The length of the game is two (2), 25-minute halves with a 10-minute halftime. The offside law is in effect. Games will require 1 referee. Teams will compete using a size 4 soccer ball. Minimum number of players required to start a game is 5. Heading is NOT allowed (see section "Heading Restrictions and Limitations" below).

- Build-Out Line:
 - Goalkeeper possession (hands) and goal kicks
 - As per US Soccer: "the build-out line promotes playing the ball out of the back in a less pressured setting."
 - The ISL Rec Northeast requires that the opponent "drops off" to the build-out line when the goalkeeper has the ball in his or her hands, and on all goal kicks. The defending team may not release from the half line until the ball has been played. Referees will be instructed to strictly enforce this rule.
 - This rule is designed encourage the development of building play out of the back.
 - The build-out line will be the half line!
- Goalkeeper distribution
 - Goalkeepers are NOT allowed to punt or drop-kick, and training should be focused upon throwing and using their feet with the ball on the ground to transition play to the attack.



- If a goalkeeper punts or drop-kicks the ball, an indirect free kick will be awarded the opposing team from the spot of the offense. If the punt or drop-kick occurs within the goal area, the indirect free kick should be taken on the goal area line parallel to the goal line at the nearest point to where the infringement occurred.
- Referees must be flexible when enforcing the 6-second rule and counting the time of possession should only begin when all opposing players have moved behind the build-out line.
- Ideally, the goalkeeper will wait to put the ball into play once all opponents are past the build-out line. However, the goalkeeper is allowed to put the ball into play sooner, but he or she does so accepting the positioning of the opponents and the consequences of how play resumes.
- Offside
 - As per US Soccer mandates, 10U will now play with the offside law.
 - The build-out line (half line) is the offside line.

12U RULES SUMMARY

The 12U division will play 9v9 with a goalkeeper, maximum roster of 18. The length of the game is two (2), 30-minute halves with a 10-minute halftime. The offside law is in effect. Games will require a 3-person referee crew. Teams will compete using a size 4 soccer ball. Unlimited substitutions at any stoppage at the discretion of the referee. Minimum number of players required to start a game is 7. See section “Heading Restrictions and Limitations” below for this age group.

13U+ RULES SUMMARY

The 13U+ division will play 11v11 with a goalkeeper, maximum roster of 25 with only 22 “game active.” The length of the game is two (2), 35-minute halves with a 10-minute halftime. The offside law is in effect. Games will require a 3-person referee crew. Teams will compete using a size 5 soccer ball. Unlimited substitutions at any stoppage at the discretion of the referee. Minimum number of players needed to start a game is 7.

SMALL-SIDED RULES SUMMARY

The Small-Sided division will play 7v7 with a goalkeeper, maximum roster of 14. The length of the game is two (2), 35-minute halves with a 10-minute halftime. The offside law is in effect. Games will require a 3-person referee crew. Teams will compete using a size 5 soccer ball. Unlimited substitutions at any stoppage at the discretion of the referee. Minimum number of players needed to start a game is 6.



Required Game Credentials

Player and Coach Passes OR League Approved Event Roster

All players, coaches, and team personnel MUST be registered/carded as a US Youth Soccer member.

At Iowa Soccer League Games, referees are instructed to conduct a pre-game check-in, asking for a roster or for player passes. Club administrators and coaches, make it part of your weekly routine to ensure what you will present to the referee on game day is updated and accessible! Prepare and have with you one of the following approved credentials:

Iowa Soccer Team Roster (hard copy or present to Referee via digital device)

- Official team roster that includes player photos is used as the primary tool for Iowa Soccer League (ISL) team check-in.

Valid Iowa Soccer player pass (hard copy that's laminated or present passes via digital device)

- Official US Youth Soccer (USYS) + Iowa Soccer pass that includes player or coach identification and photo. Hard copy MUST be on white paper and laminated.

GUEST PLAYER ALLOWANCE

What it IS

- This allowance is a tool for coaches to ensure they have enough players and/or substitutes at a game so that the game doesn't have to be rescheduled.
- The tool is not a guaranteed answer to all scenarios, or to last-minute changes in player availability, but if planned for and used properly, the allowance should minimize the need to reschedule. In cases where the allowance can't be applied, coaches are still able to reschedule matches.
- Maximum number of guest players in a match is three.

What it is NOT

- If the team has enough players and substitutes to play a match, the guest player allowance is NOT to be used.
- This allowance is NOT a tool for coaches to use to "stack" a roster with "ringer" type players just because the allowance exists or just because there is room on the team to still be under/within the maximum roster size.
- The tool is NOT to be used to gain a competitive advantage.



ABUSE OF THE ALLOWANCE

Abuse of the spirit or letter of this allowance will not be tolerated and will be dealt with harshly. Iowa Soccer will monitor guest player requests and impose strict penalties in the event a coach or club is found to have been abusing or finding ways around the allowance. Penalties for abuse will include, but are not restricted to:

- Team's/Team Coach's **first offense**
The **team loses the allowance** for the remainder of the season. If it happens in the last game of the season, the penalty will follow the team and/or coach and be applied in the next season.
- Team's/Team Coach's **second offense**
The **club loses this allowance** for the remainder of the season. If it happens in the last game of the season, the penalty will be applied club-wide for the entirety of the next season.

GUEST PLAYER FORM TIMELINE REQUIREMENT

By Noon of the Friday prior to the weekend of the game, coaches must submit their requests via the online Guest Player Form. If a guest player request has not been submitted, or submitted by the Noon deadline, the player is not eligible to guest play that weekend. The coach's submission of the online Guest Player Form will be e-mailed in real time to the League Director and immediately forwarded to your club's primary contact.

- Last minute situations
 - Should "last minute" situations arise after the Noon Friday deadline, coaches are not allowed to solicit guest players "on the fly." Meeting the established deadline and eligibility requirements is the only way coaches may use the guest player allowance.

If losing a player(s) at the last minute results in your team not having enough to players to play, then the coach must contact the opposing coach immediately to explain the situation and attempt to reschedule the game.

INFORMATION NEEDED TO SUBMIT A GUEST PLAYER REQUEST, VIA IOWA SOCCER'S ONLINE FORM:

- Coach name, contact information
- US Soccer Connect/Stack Sports Team ID number



- Additional team, game and opponent information (age group, time/date/location of match, opponent's club)
- Regular-season roster size
- Reasons for using Guest Player Allowance
- Name and birth year of the guest players who are currently registered with your club and Iowa Soccer, and who are eligible for the age group
- Names of the players from your regular-season roster who are not able to be at the game

COMPLIANCE AND APPROVAL

Iowa Soccer monitors the use of the guest player allowance and the scores of teams who use it. Any data points that indicate repeated use by a team and/or a lopsided score by a team using the guest player allowance will automatically trigger further investigation.

- Iowa Soccer has the final authority over the eligibility of guest players.

GUEST PLAYER GAME CREDENTIALS

Once the guest player form is submitted, the coach will receive an automatic e-mail response indicating approval, which is a required game credential to show to Referees during pregame. The guest player must also present his/her player pass. In the absence of either credential detailed below, the guest player may not play in that match.

- The automatic email response serves as the Guest Player Game Approval credential the coach must present to the Referee crew prior to the match; print this response and bring it to the game.
- In the event the coach does not have the paper copy, he/she may present the e-mail approval on a mobile device.
- Guest players must bring to the match their current player pass for his/her regular-season team. It must be presented to the Referee crew prior to the match.

HEADING RESTRICTIONS AND LIMITATIONS

As per the Iowa Soccer Concussion Management Policy:

- 11U and younger age groups
 - Heading is not allowed -- at practices or in games
- 12U and above age groups
 - Heading is allowed in games. Heading is limited at practices to 15-20 headers per player, per week
- Younger players “playing up”
 - If a 10-year old player is playing up in an older age group (i.e. 10 year old playing on a 12U team), the player should not be heading the ball even if playing in an age group that permits heading.
 - Parents are responsible for educating their child that they are not yet old enough to head the ball, and to communicate with the child’s coach that he/she will not be heading the ball in practices or games. Coaches must adhere to the rules restricting 10 year olds from heading the ball, so will need to be aware of who those kids are on their roster, if any.



- 15U and older age groups
 - There are no limitations or restrictions on heading at practices or in games.

PENALTY FOR INTENTIONAL HEADING – referees should be instructed to handle in the following manner:

- Outside goal area = indirect free kick, from spot of offense
- Within goal area = indirect free kick, on goal area line parallel to the goal line at point nearest spot of offense
- If not deliberate, play should continue
- Two exceptions when “advantage” should be played:
 - Deliberate, but errant header results in an own goal. Referee allows goal.
 - Deliberate, but errant header goes directly to attacker who “easily” shoots and scores. Referee allows goal.

RESCHEDULING ALLOWANCE AND NOTIFICATION OF

Team coaches have the autonomy and flexibility to reschedule matches as needed. The flexibility and structure of the League is intended to help minimize the necessity to reschedule, however coaches have this available should it be necessary.

- In order to maintain the integrity of and confidence in the public, online schedule, when a reschedule has been confirmed by coaches from each team, the HOME TEAM coach must submit the update to the League Director via an online form. Information should be submitted as soon as the change is confirmed and no later than NOON on the Friday before the game.

INFORMATION NEEDED TO SUBMIT GAME RESCHEDULE

- Original game information - age group, home and away club and team names, date, time, location, Sports Connect match number, and field designation
- Rescheduled game information -- date, time, location and field designation



INCELEMENT WEATHER & FIELD CONDITIONS

- If a facility closes due to weather conditions, it is the responsibility of the host club to email Iowa Soccer of closure.
 - Field Closure E-Mail: matchday@iowasoccer.org
- If a match has not started, field managers and coaches have the responsibility to cancel a game due to weather conditions. Both coaches must then inform the referees that they have agreed not to play a game.
- Once a match has started, the head referee is responsible for postponing matches that are a risk to all participants.